

# The Servant King

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[ 0 : 00 ] As I'm reading through this, I just keep that page open in the Bible. It's page 1015, Mark 10, starting at verse 32. Now, I don't know about any of you, but I think it's quite rare for people to have their own personal servants.

I don't have any. I don't know if you do. But normally, unless you're extremely wealthy, most people don't have a butler or a maid. There are exceptions. I'm positive, actually, 100%, that the royal family, the prime minister, have servants.

And the wealthiest in society might also be able to have it. It is a luxury to us, to have someone to do the stuff you don't have time for, clean the house, wash your clothes, drive you wherever you want to go, cook your meals. It sounds brilliant.

But it comes at a cost. It is normally reserved for those who have money or influence or power. I wonder if you could have a personal servant permanently.

What would you get to help? What would you get them to do that would help you the most in your life? What kind of a servant would you have? A personal chef? Someone to do your life admin? Sounds great.

[ 1 : 17 ] What would you get a servant to do for you? In this passage this morning, everything is turned upside down. In our world, as we've said, it is the wealthy, it is the kings, the lords, the ones who have influence and power in our world who are served.

Yet Jesus, who is the lord, who is the king, the wealthiest, everything belongs to him and was made by him and through him, has total power, influence and authority more than anyone else.

Jesus, who actually has a right to be served, he's the one who shows himself to be the servant. He's the one who shows himself to be the servant.

And so we're going to zone in on that. We're going to zone in on the fact that Jesus Christ is the servant. He's the servant king, you might call him. Three things that we're going to think about with that.

We're going to see the servant king's victory, the servant king's men, his army soldiers, his men, and the servant king's salvation. But before, the servant king's victory, his men and his salvation.

[ 2 : 27 ] Before we jump into it, just a quick recap, a reminder as to where we've got to. It's this third series that we're looking at in Mark's gospel from chapters 9 to 11.

Those three chapters, a lot packed into them, it all happens on Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem. Starts in the north and works his way down. His final journey, which will of course end at the cross and the disciples are journeying with him.

And as they literally follow him on foot towards his cross, the emphasis of Jesus' teaching is what it means to follow him spiritually.

What does it mean to live as a disciple of Jesus? As you would expect, Jesus knows where he's headed. At the forefront of his mind is the cross.

And it's therefore, I suppose, at the forefront of his teaching to them. We see that in this morning. From the off, we get Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection for the third time.

[ 3 : 31 ] Whenever we hear Jesus speak, it's obvious to say it's always really important. But when he says something twice, and then three times, it must have significant implications.

It must have implications about knowing him, his character, his future. But also, what I've mentioned, what it means to follow him. This is where we're going to kick off with our first point, the servant king's victory.

Those following Jesus expect victory, but a very different one. Look at the response as they approach their destination. As they approach Jerusalem.

Verse 32. They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way. And the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Two responses.

We've got astonishment, or amazement, it can be translated as. And we have fear. They're afraid. Jesus makes the destination. The end of the journey clear.

[ 4 : 30 ] Verse 33. We are going up to Jerusalem. It is the destination that causes the reaction. Israel, God's people, were waiting, and had been, for several hundred years, for God to send his Messiah to rescue them.

They'd been waiting for the promised king. And they knew something, a little bit, of what he would be like, and they had expectations of him. They knew that he would be a king in the royal family line of King David.

But what they wanted was that he would bring back the good old days. The good old days they'd only heard of in stories. The good old days. Bring back Israel to be that powerful nation once again. Because those days had long gone, and were reduced to just stories. And then comes Jesus.

Teaching, doing miracles, claiming to be the son of God.

Son of man, sent by God. Those who follow him are expecting that one day, he's going to rock up to Jerusalem and take his place on the throne.

[ 5 : 39 ] But they expect. Like the days of old, it will involve what the days of old were like. It will involve bloodshed. They expect a bloody violent battle.

They expect hand-to-hand combat. Everyone making the journey with Jesus think, this is the moment. We'd better prepare for battle.

And it brings genuine fear. People who may have never fought before, readying themselves to fight hand-to-hand combat. No doubt, maybe they expected to be casualties from a bloody war with the Romans.

Yet with fear, there's also amazement. Astonishment. Very soon, all our troubles will be over.

Because the king is here. It's really happening. We're marching with the king to fight a bloody battle at Jerusalem that will see our Messiah take his rightful place.

Now, I don't want to do a disservice. They were half-right. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to defeat evil.

[ 6 : 52 ] He was going to be victorious. There would be a battle. There was going to be blood. But it would be a much harder, grander, spiritual battle than they imagined.

It would be a spiritual battle that Jesus would fight alone. None of those following him would die with a sword in their hands. And the victory would not come under combat.

It would not come because of force. But it would end with Jesus lifted high, taking throne. Often in war movies, you have that moment, don't you, when the leader of the military, the commander-in-chief, makes a great speech, a motivational speech, in front of his troops to encourage and lift the guys who may be worried or fearful about the oncoming army.

It gives them a cause. It reminds them of the reason they're fighting. The one that comes to mind is quite a... I think it's a really old movie now. It's Braveheart, of course.

You've got William Wallace with his famous speech. I'm not going to do it. But his famous speech about wanting freedom. And what we see in that movie is that we see a reaction, don't we?

[ 8 : 11 ] It's William Wallace's rallying cry. And we see that, don't we? We see cheers, and it motivates them to fight against the English.

What is Jesus' rallying cry? How does he prepare the men that are following him with what's going to happen when they get to get there?

Let me tell you what's going to happen. Let me encourage you, Jesus says. So he repeats to them, verse 33. Look with me. Jesus' rallying cry.

The Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him.

Three days later he will rise. This servant king, his victory will come not from fighting to the death, but by doing it willingly.

[ 9 : 17 ] Not even resisting it in any way. The victory is secured by Jesus willingly giving himself to death and in complete humiliation. This third prediction is much more graphic if you know the other two.

He's mocked, spat on, flogged and killed. It's not quite what I think what they had in mind. Over the last few weeks and in these few chapters that we're looking at over the next wee while, on many occasions we hear constantly Jesus referring that the first will be last and the last first. It's the final verse of the passage we looked last week in verse 31. In verse 44 we get this week the same idea, but the bar is raised.

Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. Slave of all. Jesus' victory comes, happens, because he becomes a slave.

He dies the death of a slave. He comes not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[10:32] The Son of Man, that picture of the Messiah in the Old Testament, of the one who will come. The victory Jesus secures is by serving you in his death.

He becomes the ransom. Like ransom money that pays to set someone free that's been captured, Jesus pays for you being free from being captivated by sin and death.

He pays for your freedom. He is the ransom. He is expended in every way for your sake. He is the chief servant of his own kingdom. Just pause and reflect on that.

That the chief servant of the kingdom of God is the king himself. Is there any other kingdom or any other nation that can claim that?

That the chief servant is the king of the kingdom? This is the king that we follow. This is Jesus Christ. He comes to serve you.

[11:39] So that's the first point. The king's, the servant king's victory. Comes through his servanthood right to death for us. What does that mean about all those following him after they've heard the rally cry?

Move to our second point. The servant king's men. The servant king's men. Jesus, the servant king, wants his men, his disciples, those who are following him, not to fight with weapons, but to fight by becoming servants like he is.

When you hear William Wallace's rallying cry, it is clear what he means to all those brave Scots. There's no misunderstanding as to what he wants. They're hanging off his every word. And it's met, like I said, with a war cry.

And the point is that he wants them to follow him into battle. When Jesus gives his rallying call, there's no applause, there's no war cry.

They don't understand it and they either ignore it or don't listen. Frustratingly for Jesus, this is the third time he's told them. They didn't understand it before and they don't understand it now.

[12:47] And it's the thought of Jesus on the throne that captures their imagination. James and John, they can't hold themselves back. Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.

Notice how James and John treat Jesus like a servant. And even most, I agree, Jesus answers like, what do you want me to do? Even when the disciples misunderstand, Jesus acts like their servant. Sitting to the right or left of a leader was reserved for a son or an heir or perhaps the chief advisor to a leader. That's what they want. After this is all done with Jesus, after you've got the victory and you've restored to your rightful place, can we be the most prominent in your kingdom after you?

Verse 38, Jesus corrects them. They still don't get it. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I'm baptized with? The right answer, by the way, is no, we can't.

But they say we can. The cup Jesus refers to have nothing to do with messianic war. He's using picture language. He's using picture language to describe what's actually taking place at his death.

[14:08] The cup Jesus drinks is a picture of God's anger and judgment at sin. Jesus will drink the cup of God's anger right down to the dregs. He will be separated from his father for the first time.

Know what it means to die and suffer alone. When Jesus drinks the cup, he will taste divine hatred and anger at sin. And James and John say, yeah, yeah, we can do that.

Meaning, put us in your right and in your left. We deserve it. That competitive desire among the twelve of them to outrank one another has not gone away.

There is chosen twelve through whom the church will be birthed. Like soldiers that take the lead from their senior officer, he expects them to follow his lead. And he is quite sharp with them.

He's very firm with them. You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their officials exercise authority over them.

[15:14] Not so with you, he says. Not so with you. This is not the way of my men, my disciples, my people. And then he spells it out.

Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. You see what he's saying? He's saying how your acting is like the rulers of the world.

Your desires are no different to them to be top of the tree and get what you want and lord it over, have the privilege of position. Not so with you, he says. Not to follow the way I do things.

And again, we get that famous verse that many of us have heard. For even the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

And in the context what he's saying is you definitely have to live like this because even I have to live like this. Even I am the son of man and I've come to do this. You're following me. You're following me.

[16:14] This is the way that we fight with love and serve this. He wants his men to follow his lead fighting the battle by serving in love. What that means for us is that in the church it means that just like there's no one ahead really of James and John there's no rightful desire to be at the top of the tree it means that there's no one ahead of you who's closer to Jesus than anyone else.

It means the minister and the elders are not closer to Jesus than the youngest or the most recent believer. It means my relationship as the minister with Jesus Christ is no more special than yours. No one has a bigger claim on Jesus Christ because of who they are or what they've done. Which means that leaders or anyone else in the church actually has no right to lord it over anyone else. People abusing their power is everywhere and unfortunately the history of the church is not free of that scandal. Abuse of power manipulation and control has a documented history in the church. Jesus says to each of us and especially to leaders not so with you. not so with you. You're here to serve one another.

[17:47] That is how his army of followers win the battle. They serve one another with love. Going out on a limb to bless to finish last even to become one of those slaves.

It's provocative language isn't it? It's very provocative. Who is your you think you think this this is provocative. When you look around the church who is who is your if you're to be the slave of everyone who is your master?

Jesus says it's the person standing next to you. You're to be the slave of all. And so finally we talked about the servant king's victory.

We've talked about the servant king's men. We're going to finish it with the servant king's salvation. Finally thinking about that. In this final section of today's reading we see a picture of salvation.

We see a picture of what the servant king's salvation is like. Jesus sets Bartimaeus the blind beggar free from his biggest need. Bit of context is needed for what it means to be physically blind in those days.

[18:58] Any physical deformity or disability was viewed as a curse. Something that something must have happened in your family history that you meant that you deserved this lot in life.

To be blind it was like being a leper. You were responsible for your position in life and then for your position as an outcast was seen as the right place for you. If you were born in that position in life as well your life could be mapped out.

Everyone knew you'd end up if you were born blind everyone knew what they could say in what you'd be doing once you were an adult. You'd be destitute you'd be scrambling around for food you'd be overlooked with a common view serves him right.

He must have deserved it because he's had this curse. That is the situation of this beggar. He has no hope. This blind beggar verse 35 sitting by the roadside begging doing probably what he's done nearly every day of his life.

Day in day out probably sat in the same place every day begging just to survive. And all he's told is that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

[20:07] We don't know what else he knows about Jesus but he knows enough because it's on that basis alone that he calls out. Verse 47 Jesus Son of David have mercy on me.

He's met with a rebuke like shut up but it has the opposite effect. It makes him shout louder. Verse 48 he shouts all the more Son of David have mercy on me.

Bartimaeus may have physical blindness but spiritually speaking he can see better than anyone. This blind beggar sees and knows who Jesus is. He knows who he's calling to and he knows that this king has mercy to give.

Isn't this the type of childlike dependence Jesus talks about? Like a little baby who knows to cry for milk from its mother this man knows he needs to call on his king.

Jesus is on the road to the cross. We've said that's at the forefront of his mind but he still has time for this nobody. He's not a nobody to Jesus.

[ 21 : 24 ] Jesus stops calls Bartimaeus to himself and asks the same question. Isn't this amazing what we see here? He asks the same question exactly worded that he asked the disciples.

That question that a servant asks its master what do you want me to do for you? What do you want me to do for you? It's remarkable. The king of the kingdom God's kingdom says to a nobody what do you want me to do for you?

This is the king. The blind man said Rabbi I want to see. Go said Jesus your faith has healed you. Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

The label that this man has carried his whole life is defunct. It's gone. Bartimaeus his whole life was directed by everybody thinking he was cursed his physical blindness but it's gone.

And notice notice with me it doesn't say immediately he received his sight and he sat back down on the roadside and carried on begging all his days. His life is transformed.

[ 22 : 29 ] He walks on the road he keeps his eyes on Jesus Christ on God himself and he follows him towards Jerusalem. his life will never be the same.

The very thing that has made his life a misery Jesus has removed. The very thing that brought shame on him Jesus has removed. The very thing that made him an outcast Jesus has removed.

His whole life is transformed because Jesus serves this man and in serving him he saves him.

Jesus is the servant king. He comes to serve you by saving you. He comes to serve you by transforming you to set you free. And so he asks the same question to each of us today.

What do you want me to do for you? What do you want Jesus to do for you? Will you answer like the disciples or like Bartimaeus with the eyes of faith?

Bartimaeus' transformation is a picture of what Jesus' kingship his servant kingship does. We're all down in the dirt scrambling around for hope for satisfaction for meaning and purpose and Jesus calls us to himself he gives his eyes to see him and says follow me.

[ 23 : 56 ] Will you follow Jesus afresh today? Let him take away your shame because he approves of you. And so as we come in for landing Jesus is the servant king.

He wins a great victory he has a great army of followers that win the battle through serving with love that is what it means to follow Jesus Christ and we do it because he loved us first because he served us with love he set us free he transformed us we're not the people we once were because what has happened to Bartimaeus has actually happened to each of us it's not like we're waiting for it because he's given us the eyes of faith and we followed him the servant king comes to serve you asks you the same question what do you want me to do for you how you answer reveals what you think of him how you answer that question really reveals if you know who he is and what he's here for he asks you today what do you want me to do for you let's pray almighty god it's amazing to think of who you are the servant king the king who wins a great victory the king who wins a great victory by serving us into his own death so that we would be set free and transformed so that we'd be set free from all shame all sin all death and evil we thank you that you win this great victory of serving with love and lord you give us that great model the picture of what you want your people your church to be like to serve one another out of love lord to see everyone in the same way that Jesus sees Bartimaeus that to Jesus there is no nobodies everybody has everybody has equal worth and so living God I pray that you would help us to follow you to see how much you've served us and loved us and serve others in response to how great your love is we praise you that you've set us free that these words are true for us today that you have transformed us to live a life that follows you that knows you that praises and worships you where you are the centre of our eyes where we keep our eyes on you through life as we walk towards the heavenly Jerusalem that will come we ask that you would equip us that you would help us to keep our eyes on you as we follow you to walk as you would walk we ask and so we pray for your blessing upon us and ask for your help in Jesus name Amen